

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 AID-05 /064 W  
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R 061028Z SEP 77  
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8750  
INFO AMCONSUL ADANA  
AMCONSUL ISTANBUL  
AMCONSUL IZMIR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ANKARA 6601

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PDIP, PROP, OGEN, ASEC, TU  
SUBJECT: TURKISH PRESS INTEREST IN U.S. DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS

1. A CONTINUING PROBLEM AFFECTING OUR POLITICAL OFFICERS' ABILITY TO DO CONTACT WORK IS THE TENDENCY OF THE TURKISH PRESS TO TREAT DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITIES THAT WE REGARD AS INNOCUOUS--SUCH AS CALLING ON PARLIAMENTARIANS AND WATCHING POLITICAL RALLIES--AS SINISTER EFFORTS TO INTERFERE IN DOMESTIC POLITICS. PERIODICALLY FOR MANY YEARS THEREHAVE BEEN SENSATIONAL FRONT-PAGE STORIES FOLLOWED BY DENUNCIATORY EDITORIALS ABOUT MINOR, OVERT INFORMATION-GATHERING ACTIVITIES BY POLITICAL OFFICERS FROM THE EMBASSY AND CONSTITUENT POSTS. THE PRESS SEEMS GUIDED BY AND PLAYING TO AN ABNORMAL BUT GENERALIZED SUPER-SUSPICIOUSNESS BORN OF TURKEY'S BITTER EXPERIENCES WITH THE GREAT POWERS DURING THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES.

2. IN THE LATEST EPISODE, MAJOR PLAY WAS GIVEN A ROUTINE GET-ACQUAINTED CALL BY EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER DONALD ROBERTS ON TWO INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARIANS FROM EASTERN TURKEY, NURETTIN YILMAZ AND ADBULKERIM ZILAN. THE TWO  
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DEPUTIES SET ROBERTS UP FOR TROUBLE BY ARRIVING AT THE MEETING ACCOMPANIED BY REPORTS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS. SINCE WITHDRAWAL AT THAT POINT WOULD ITSELF HAVE AROUSED SUSPICION, ROBERTS DECIDED TO PROCEED WITH CALL IN HOPES OF ACCOMPLISHING HIS INITIAL PURPOSE--ESTABLISHING A WORKING RELATIONSHIP--AND OF DISABUSING YILMAZ, ZILAN AND THE REPORTERS OF THE IDEA THAT THERE WAS ANYTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT AN OFFICER OF THE

AMERICAN EMBASSY EXCHANGING VIEWS WITH ELECTED TURKISH OFFICIALS. UNFORTUNATELY, YILMAZ AND ZILAN WERE NOT COOPERATIVE. AFTER AN INITIAL EXCHANGE OF PLEASANTRIES, ROBERTS EXPLAINED HIS INTEREST, AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF AN ALLIED STATE, IN ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH A BROAD RANGE OF TURKISH OFFICIALS. HE ASKED FOR THEIR VIEWS ON TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS. THEY WERE GENERALLY UNRESPONSIVE, POINTING OUT THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY DEALT WITH SUCH THINGS. ROBERTS ASKED SEVERAL OTHER QUESTIONS TO WHICH HE RECEIVED GUARDED RESPONSES. THEN YILMAZ, CLEARLY PLAYING TO THE REPORTERS, LAUNCHED INTO A CONDEMNATION OF THE U.S. YILMAZ SAID THE TURKISH PEOPLE HAD DEVELOPED AN ALLERGY TO THE U.S. AS A RESULT OF U.S. PRESSURE. HE ALSO SAID THAT IT IS GENERALLY KNOWN AND BELIEVED THAT CIA INTERFERES IN THE AFFAIRS OF OTHER COUNTRIES AND THE AVERAGE TURK BELIEVES THE CIA HAS "STUCK ITS FINGER" INTO TURKEY'S DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. YILMAZ WARNED THAT AMERICAN PRESSURE ON THE QUESTION OF CYPRUS WOULD ACCOMPLISH NOTHING AND THAT AMERICA SHOULD NOT INTERFERE IN TURKISH AFFAIRS. (AFTER THE REPORTERS HAD LEFT, YILMAZ HASTENED TO ASSURE ROBERTS THAT HE PERSONALLY DID NOT BELIEVE WHAT HE HAD SAID BUT WAS MERELY REPEATING "WHAT EVERYONE IS SAYING".) THE CONVERSATION THEN CONTINUED ON TO VARIOUS SUBJECTS WHICH WERE DISCUSSED IN A MUCH LESS CHARGED ATMOSPHERE. WHEN ROBERTS BROUGHT UP THE SUBJECT OF ALLEGED IMBALANCES IN DEVELOPMENT LEVELS BETWEEN EASTERN AND WESTERN TURKEY--A SUBJECT ABOUT WHICH BOTH YILMAZ AND ZILAN

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HAD BEEN PUBLICLY OUTSPOKEN--YILMAZ ASKED THE REPORTERS TO LEAVE SO HE "COULD SPEAK OPENLY". THE CONVERSATION THEN SHIFTED TO EASTERN AND KURDISH PROBLEMS WHICH BOTH YILMAZ AND ZILAN DISCUSSED WITHOUT HESITATION. THE MEETING ENDED ON A FRIENDLY NOTE.

3. THE FOLLOWING DAY, LOCAL PRESS SERVICES CARRIED A LENGTHY BUT SELECTIVE ACCOUNT OF THE MEETING, NOT MENTIONING EITHER ROBERTS' EXPLANATION OF HIS FUNCTION AS A DIPLOMAT (MOST VERSIONS STATED THAT HE REFUSED TO GIVE AN EXPLANATION) OR THE FACT THAT YILMAZ EVENTUALLY ASKED THE PRESS TO LEAVE THE ROOM SO THAT A PRIVATE DISCUSSION COULD TAKE PLACE. PRESS COVERAGE AUG. 26 WAS BASED ON WIRE SERVICE ACCOUNTS AND WAS MILDLY SENSATIONAL. NEARLY EVERY PAPER CARRIED IT AS A FRONT PAGE STORY; SOME ALSO CARRIED A PHOTOGRAPH OF ROBERTS AND THE TWO DEPUTIES. LEFTIST PAPERS GENERALLY STRESSED THAT YILMAZ HAD ASSERTED CIA INVOLVEMENT IN INTERNAL TURKISH AFFAIRS. IN SUBSEQUENT EDITORIAL REACTION, LEFTIST, CHRONICALLY ANTI-AMERICAN CUMHURIYET COLUMNIST ALI SIRMEN PREDICTABLY CRITICIZED ROBERTS' ACTIVITIES. EXTREME RIGHT WING BAYRAK PRINTED TWO CRITICAL EDITORIALS SUGGESTING THAT THE U.S. MIGHT BE INVOLVED IN KURDISH SEPARATIST ACTIVITIES.

LEFT-WING DISK-OWNED POLITIKA EDITORIALY SUGGESTED THAT THE ROBERTS VISIT WAS INDICATIVE OF A NEW KIND OF "UGLY AMERICANSIM". LEFT-WING WEEKLY NEW MAGAZINE YEDI GUN ALSO RAN A CRITICAL ARTICLE ENTITLED " A CIA AGENT IN THE PARLIAMENT", WITH THE CAPTION "CIA AGENT" UNDER ROBERTS' PICTURE.

4. WE EXPECT THAT THIS EPISODE WILL QUICKLY CEASE TO BE A PRESS TOPIC OF ITSELF BUT WILL BECOME PART OF THE LOCAL POLITICAL MYTHOLOGY, HELPING "PROVE" ALLEGATIONS OF INTER-FERENCE IN TURKISH DOMESTIC POLITICS.

5. THE PRESS PRACTICE ILLUSTRATED HERE (AND THIS IS ONLY THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE) POSES A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS:

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A. IT TENDS TO RESTRICT OUR ACCESS TO IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF TURKISH POLITICAL LIFE AND SOMETIMES SEVERELY HAMPERS OUR ABILITY TO DO THE KIND OF ON-THE-SPOT OBSERVATION AND CONTACT WORK THAT WE ARE HERE FOR. WHILE THE UPPER ECHELONS OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES UNDERSTAND THE ADVANTAGES OF MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH US, THEY HAVE TO ACCEPT THE CREATIONS OF THE PRESS AS POLITICAL REALITIES. THUS, AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS YEAR'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN, BOTH MAJOR PARTIES ASKED US TO STOP OUR NORMAL ACTIVITIES IN OVERTLY FOLLOWING THE CAMPAIGN BECAUSE THE PRESS HAD PICKED UP FOR SPECIAL TREATMENT A POLITICAL OFFICER'S CALL ON A PROVINCIAL PARTY OFFICIAL.

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8751  
INFO AMCONSUL ADANA

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL  
AMCONSUL IZMIR

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B. IT RAISES SECURITY PROBLEMS, ESPECIALLY WHEN AN OFFICER IS TAGGED AS A "CIA AGENT". (ROBERTS HAS BEEN BRIEFED ON THE NEED FOR SPECIAL CAUTION; SO FAR, HOWEVER, WE HAVE SEEN NO INDICATION OF SPECIFIC DANGER TO HIS SAFETY.

C. IT ADDS NEEDLESSLY TO THE STRAINS AND IRRITANTS IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

D. IT FEEDS POPULAR SUSPICIONS ABOUT THE U.S., ESPECIALLY BECAUSE IT IS FOCUSED ONLY ON THE U.S., NEVER ON ANY OTHER COUNTRIES' REPRESENTATIVES.

E. FINALLY, IT DEMONSTRATES ONCE MORE THE DEPTH OF THE DIFFERENCES IN CULTURE AND HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE THAT SEPARATE THE U.S. AND TURKEY.

6. WE SEE NO ALTERNATIVE TO CONTINUING NORMAL OVERT EFFORTS TO AMINTAIN FIRST-HAND CONTACT WITH TURKEY'S POLITICAL WORLD. WE HAVE RE-EXAMINED OUR METHODS AND WILL TAKE ALL POSSIBLE PRECAUTIONS AGAINST PUBLICITY, BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT WE HAVE A CERTAIN IRREDUCIBLE VULNERABILITY (EVEN SPEAKING TURKISH AND HAVING A CIRCLE OF TURKISH ACQUAINTANCES CAN BE MADE CONFIDENTIAL

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TO SEEM SUSPICIOUS, AS ONE NEWSPAPER ONCE SHOWED IN A REFERENCE TO THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR). AT THE SAME TIME, WE INTEND TO MEET WITH SELECTED EDITORS TO POINT OUT THAT BY SENSATIONALIZING OUR NORMAL ACTIVITIES, THEY ARE IMPEDING OUR CAPACITY TO UNDERSTAND TURKEY (TO OUR MUTUAL DETRIMENT), AND MAY ALSO BE ENDANGERING THE LIVES OF OUR OFFICERS. WE INTEND ALSO TO CONVEY SIMILAR VIEWS IN INFORMAL CONTACTS WITH SOME OF THE FRIENDLIER OFFICIALS IN THE MFA.  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009